



Criminalistics Laboratory

St. Charles County Sheriff's Department

An ASCLD/LAB Accredited Laboratory

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INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

Legal High JWH-018

The St. Charles County Sheriff's Department Criminalistics Laboratory received a packet labeled "K2 Summit" (photo 1) that was legally purchased from a store within the county for \$30. The



Photo 1

packet contained approximately 3 grams of green/brown vegetative substance – not similar in appearance to marijuana (photos 2 & 3) – that exhibited a spice or herbal aroma. Analysis of the vegetative material was negative for marijuana (THC). Additional analyses by GC/MS indicated 1-Pentyl-3-(1-naphthoyl)indole, also known as JWH-018. JWH-018 is a synthetic substance with pharmacological properties similar to the tetrahydrocannabinols (THC) contained in marijuana.

While they are similar, JWH-018 is not structurally related to THC or other controlled substances; thus, JWH-018 is not controlled in Missouri or under the Federal Controlled Substance Act (CSA). Spice Cannabinoids, including JWH-018, are on the DEA's list of Drugs & Chemicals of Concern.¹ Legislation has recently been introduced in Missouri (HB1472) to make JWH-018 a schedule I controlled substance.



Photo 2



Photo 3

JWH-018 was first synthesized in 1995 in a university laboratory in the US for experimental purposes. JWH-018 is reportedly four to five times more potent than THC; however, there are no published studies on its effects in humans.

There are numerous other similar herbal products including "Skunk", "Sence", "Spice", "Puff", and "Pulse" that may contain synthetic cannabinoids. Many are marketed as an herbal incense not for human consumption. The marijuana-mimicking compounds are added to the plant material by the manufacturer and their concentration (potency) can vary widely from batch-to-batch. There are numerous reports of herbal mixtures being smoked and the users experiencing cannabis-like effects. Most accounts report that urine & blood samples from users of these products test negative for THC - and its metabolites.

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¹ DEA website; http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/index.html